

Half of Australia's carers are depressed – making a hard job even harder

Carers Week 14 – 20 October 2012

Research suggests that more than half of Australia's carers (56 per cent) have at least moderate depression and a fifth of them have severe depression.

Research also shows that due to the constant and sometimes overwhelming nature of their roles, these people are often at greater risk of developing depression. With one in eight Australians supporting a family member or friend who is unwell, that amounts to thousands of people at risk of depression.

CEO of beyondblue, Kate Carnell AO, said when a person has depression or anxiety, it's like the ripple effect of a stone being thrown into a pond. "It's not just the person with depression or anxiety who is affected, it's their partners, parents, children, extended family members, friends and colleagues who are likely to be affected as well.

"With a million people in Australia having depression at any one time – and over two million experiencing an anxiety disorder, many people are supporting or caring for someone who's having a tough time, or coping with the repercussions of their mental health problems. Just do the maths; it's a huge problem for our community.

"While the spotlight is on the army of carers Australia-wide this week, it's a good time to remember, it's a round-the-clock commitment, 52 weeks a year.

"It's important that carers look after their own mental health and if they are experiencing symptoms of depression or anxiety, seek help from a GP. Some symptoms include feeling overwhelmed, unhappy, tired, rundown, worried, anxious, panicky, having difficulty calming down or sleeping, and not wanting to go out.

"It is even harder for a carer if your own health is not good," Ms Carnell said.

beyondblue has a free booklet and free DVD aimed specifically at helping people who support and care for someone with depression or anxiety. The resources provide practical strategies, advice and guidance on how to deal with situations people in a caring role may face. These resources were produced in association with people who have cared for family members with mental health problems and who know what a tough job it can be.

The booklet beyondblue Guide for Carers and the DVD Carers' Stories of Hope and Recovery can be ordered via the website www.beyondblue.org.au or by calling the info line 1300 22 4636. The booklet is also available in Greek, Italian, Arabic, Mandarin, Dari and Vietnamese.

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